United Nations E/2000/65

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 June 2000

Original: English

Substantive session of 2000
New York, 5 July-1 August 2000
Coordination segment
Item 1 of the provisional agenda*
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Themes for the high-level and coordination segments of the substantive session of 2001 of the Economic and Social Council

Note by the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Theme for the high-level segment	2–9	2
	A. Proposals of Member States	3	2
	B. Proposals of bodies of the United Nations system	4	3
	C. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies	5–7	4
	D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme	8–9	4
II.	Possible themes for the coordination segment	10–15	6
	A. Proposals of Member States	11	6
	B. Proposals by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system	12	6
	C. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme	13–15	8
III.	Proposals by the Secretary-General	16–22	9

* E/2000/100.

00-47499 (E) 220600

1. The present note is submitted to facilitate consultations among Member States on themes for the high-level and coordination segments of the substantive session of 2001 of the Economic and Social Council.

I. Theme for the high-level segment

2. In paragraph 53 of annex I to its resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996, the General Assembly decided that, with regard to the theme for the general debate of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Council, following consultations with Member States and, through the Secretary-General, with members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), should present a proposal for a topical theme for the following year at the annual substantive session of the Council. At such session, the Council should undertake consultations on the theme for the high-level segment with a view to reaching a decision, if possible, during the substantive session, but not later than at a resumed session in the autumn following the annual session.

A. Proposals of Member States

3. The Secretary-General consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 22 March 2000, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Australia: freedom from want;

(b) Malta: role of the Economic and Social Council in the new millennium;

(c) Morocco:

(i) Contribution of the reduction of external debt to the success of strategies of combating poverty;

(ii) Reduction of customs barriers as a factor of development and regional economic integration;

(d) Pakistan:

(i) Role of the United Nations in the management of the global economic system;

(ii) Mobilization of international financial resources for poverty eradication in developing countries;

(iii) Role and importance of education/human resources in development;

(e) Poland: democracy and development;

(f) Portugal on behalf of the European Union (EU):

(i) The potential for developing regional approaches to challenges of socio-economic crises and natural disasters in Africa;

(ii) Operational activities in Africa.

B. Proposals of bodies of the United Nations system

4. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs consulted with the relevant bodies of the United Nations system through a letter dated 21 March 2000, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Economic Commission for Europe (ECE):

(i) Economic and social rights in the context of globalization and democratization;

(ii) Building institutions as a basis for a well-functioning economy and human security: the respective roles of the State and the international community;

(b) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA):

(i) Urbanization and development;

(ii) Sustainable management of energy and water resources;

(iii) Cultural diversity as a resource for development in a globalizing world;

(c) United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention of the United Nations Office at Vienna:

(i) Rule of law and development;

(ii) Forty years after the adoption of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs: achievements and results;

(d) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO):

(i) Impact of globalization on poverty eradication;

(ii) Role and impact of genetically modified organisms in respect of the fight against hunger and malnutrition;

(iii) United Nations/private sector partnerships: lessons learned to date and the road ahead;

(iv) Biotechnology in agriculture: opportunities and threats;

(v) Role of agricultural research in poverty alleviation and food security;

(vi) Impact of global warming on agriculture;

(vii) Effect of globalization and regionalization of the world food system;

(viii) The place of agriculture in sustainable rural development;

(ix) New partnership in development: opportunities and challenges in working effectively with civil society and the private sector in the context of decentralization and privatization;

(x) Synergies among international environmental conventions and agreements, including Agenda 21;

(e) International Monetary Fund (IMF): poverty reduction;

(f) United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA):

(i) Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS);

(ii) Youth and how international conferences contribute to their improvement/well-being;

(iii) Data capacity, indicators in the context of monitoring conferences;

(g) International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): contribution of international civil aviation to sustainable economic development and the promotion of peace and understanding among people of the world;

(h) Universal Postal Union (UPU): topic in relation to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

C. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies

5. In paragraph 43 of section II of the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/151 of 18 December 1991 entitled "Final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990", the Assembly decided that the Economic and Social Council would devote part of its high-level segment in 1998 to the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, with a view to conducting a final review and assessment of the implementation of the New Agenda in the year 2000. Subsequently, the final review was postponed to the year 2002.

6. In paragraph 22 of agreed conclusions 1999/2,[1] the Economic and Social Council, on the basis of discussion on the coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to the following theme: development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development, recommended that a linkage should be established between the discussion and conclusions on coordination and harmonization reached at the coordination segment of 1999 with the preparatory work for the Council's high-level segment on African development, to be scheduled before 2002, and the final review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s which would occur in the same year.

7. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 54/234 of 22 December 1999 entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", the General Assembly welcomed the decision of the Economic and Social Council to hold a high-level segment on Africa in 2001.

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

8. In selecting the theme for its high-level segment, the Economic and Social Council may take into account the following considerations:

(a) The Council may choose a major economic and/or social policy theme of topical interest;

(b) The theme should allow for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach;

(c) The theme should enable the Council to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the international trade and financial institutions;

(d) The deliberations of the high-level segment should provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitate the consideration of the issues in question, including the emergence of new recommendations on the issues in relevant forums (see General Assembly resolution 45/264 of 13 May 1991, annex, para. 5 (d) (i));

(e) It may be recalled that the Agenda for Development[2] specified that the high-level segment of the Council should be used for improving the synergy between the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In so doing, the Council should also contribute towards enhancing the interaction between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (see General Assembly resolution 51/240 of 20 June 1997, annex, para. 252 (a));

(f) It may also be recalled that, in the event that a matter of high urgency and priority subsequently emerges that would qualify as a theme for the high-level segment, the Council may, as appropriate, consider that theme as an additional topic for discussion at the high-level segment (see General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, para. 53).

9. Box 1 highlights the themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments in previous years.

Box 1
Themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments since 1995

1995	Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s
1996	International cooperation against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotics and psychotropic substances and related activities
1997	Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade
1998	Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round: implications, opportunity and challenges, in particular for developing countries and least developed countries, in the context of globalization and liberalization
1999	The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women
2000	Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy

II. Possible themes for the coordination segment

10. In its agreed conclusions 1995/1,[3] the Economic and Social Council invited the Secretary-General, taking into account the suggestions made in his 1995 report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (E/1995/86, para. 57) and based on the work of relevant subsidiary bodies and through consultations with Member States, relevant organs of the United Nations system and specialized agencies, to offer suggestions for possible common themes for follow-up of major international conferences for consideration and decision by the Council. The Council decided that, in that segment, it should carry out a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference. The Council also decided that the theme for the follow-up to conferences would be chosen at the Council's previous substantive session to allow for adequate preparations.

A. Proposals of Member States

11. The Secretary-General consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 22 March 2000, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Malta: role of ACC in the new millennium;

(b) Morocco:

(i) Role and contribution of the United Nations system in integrating the disabled persons in economic and social development;

(ii) Impact of good governance on the improvement of basic social services;

(c) Pakistan:

(i) Impact of the external debt burden on the United Nations efforts towards poverty eradication;

(ii) Transfer of technology from the developed to the developing countries and its role in promoting sustainable development;

(d) Portugal on behalf of EU:

(i) HIV/AIDS;

(ii) Development indicators.

B. Proposals by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

12. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs consulted with the relevant bodies of the United Nations system through a letter dated 21 March 2000, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) ECE: assessment of the progress made in the development and effective implementation of legal instruments for the preservation of the environment;

(b) ESCWA:

(i) Development of a coordinated and integrated global statistical information system for follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits;

(ii) Proceeding with the coordinated implementation of provisions of Agenda 21 related to water and environment;

(iii) Developments in desalination technology with a view to mitigating water scarcity;

(c) United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention: cooperation between the United Nations system and the private sector;

(d) FAO:

(i) Coordinated follow-up and implementation by the United Nations system of the World Food Summit Plan of Action;

(ii) Cooperation between the United Nations system and the private sector, particularly multinationals;

(iii) Coordination of emergency responses between the United Nations and other agencies and reduction of response time;

(iv) Appraisal of the United Nations system effectiveness in development and facilitation of international standards and regulatory frameworks;

(v) Revision and harmonization of institutional mechanisms for decisions and implementation of environmental conventions and agreements for cost-effectiveness and win-win options;

(e) United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat):

(i) Urbanization: coordinated strategies by the United Nations system for reducing poverty and promoting social and economic progress in an urbanizing world;

(ii) Good governance;

(f) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

(i) Follow-up to the Second Global Knowledge Conference and to the Infoethics 2000 Conference;

(ii) Science for the twenty-first century: a new commitment: coordinated follow-up to the World Conference on Science by the United Nations system.

C. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

13. In selecting a theme for its coordination segment, the Economic and Social Council may wish to take the following factors into account:

(a) The theme should be a major cross-cutting outcome of several international conferences in the economic, social or related fields;

(b) The theme should be a subject of operational relevance to a number of organizations of the system and/or a subject in respect of which several functional commissions have been active;

(c) The theme should have a significant policy dimension so as to maximize the benefit that could be derived from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system during the discussions;

(d) The discussion of the theme by the Council and the agreed conclusions on the theme should contribute to enhanced coordination of policies and activities by the United Nations system.

14. It should also be underscored that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, provided for the Council's coordination segment to deal with one or more themes. In resolution 50/227, the Assembly provided that the Council might give consideration to choosing a second theme dealing with concrete sectoral issues. Thus, in addition to the theme for follow-up to conferences, the Council may also choose a sectoral theme at its substantive session.

15. Themes examined by the Council at its coordination segment in previous years are listed in box 2.

Box 2
Themes considered by the Council at its coordination segments

1995	Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields
1996	Coordination of United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (three sub-themes)
1997	Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system
	Freshwater, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation
1998	Coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
1999	Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development
2000	Assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to

major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Coordinated implementation by the United Nations system of the Habitat Agenda

III. Proposals by the Secretary-General

16. In paragraph 22 of its agreed conclusions 1999/2, the Economic and Social Council determined the parameters of a linkage between, *inter alia*, the preparatory work for the Council's high-level segment on African development, to be scheduled before 2002, and the final review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s which would occur in the same year. To this end, the Council requested the Secretary-General to commission an independent evaluation of the performance of the New Agenda, including its relationship with other relevant initiatives. Such evaluation should clearly show achievements and shortcomings in overall performance, particularly in regard to identified priority areas and in meeting agreed targets. The evaluation should also make recommendations for future action, including consideration of successor arrangements, and be completed with sufficient lead time for inclusion in the preparatory work for the final review of the New Agenda, scheduled to take place in 2002.

17. In the light of the above considerations and of the proposals advanced by Member States and bodies of the United Nations system, the following theme is recommended for the Council's consideration at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2001:

The role of the United Nations system in promoting socio-economic development of Africa in the twenty-first century.

18. In the course of preparations for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in the year 2000 on the theme of "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy", in particular in the course of the meeting of the high-level panel of experts on information and communication technology, it was underscored that some vital needs of the poorest of the poor (such as affordable medicines and textbooks, non-text-based interface for computers and so forth) could be effectively met with the current levels of resources and with currently available technology. This does not happen primarily because the private sector, operating on the profit/loss basis, does not have adequate incentives to provide these goods and services.

19. At the same time, it is known that private business is actively exploring modalities to take a more active role in contributing to the improvement of the global social situation. Currently, this exploration is undertaken primarily via private foundations that are actively looking for appropriate partners, effective channels and, notably, for certain guidance as to the more urgent and feasible areas and activities for them to finance.

20. The existing web of non-governmental organizations, and government and multilateral agencies involved in providing and facilitating aid is complicated,

multilayered and uncoordinated. As a result, private business is sometimes discouraged rather than supported in its attempts to enhance its social responsibility profile through partnership with other development actors.

21. The Secretary General's initiatives contained in his report to the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations (A/54/2000), building on his earlier initiative of a global compact on human rights, labour and environment and on such important recent endeavours as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and its Global Fund for Children's Vaccines, point the way for addressing this situation through establishing new partnerships and involving new actors in the global effort to combat poverty.

22. The United Nations is uniquely positioned to spearhead this effort, global in scope and comprehensive in the involvement of participants, and to define its priorities, and effective and efficient modalities, to coordinate implementation and provide assessment of progress. It is therefore recommended that the coordination segment of the substantive session of 2001 of the Economic and Social Council address the following theme:

Complementing the markets: the role of the United Nations in forging new partnerships for addressing the needs of the world's poor.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/54/3/Rev.1), chap. V, para. 6.

[2] General Assembly resolution 51/240, annex.

[3] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/50/3/Rev.1), chap. III, para. 22.